

DOWN TO EARTH

City needs better drainage

by ASM Nurunnabi

The monsoon has just set in. During the last few days, we had spells of heavy rain that literally flooded many areas of the city, submerging a number of busy roads and dozens of lanes and by-lanes — not to speak of the onrush of rain water into low-lying neighbourhoods. We had thus a glimpse of the woes that have been accompanying the rainy season year after year.

Up until now, Dhaka, especially the older parts of it, had a very poor system of disposal of its refuse and garbage. This, combined with the city's inadequate and faulty drainage system, causes the rainy season floods. Unplanned construction and filling up of the low lands have been responsible for much of today's water logging and unsafe disposal of drain water.

In the past there were canals crisscrossing the city which helped to dispose rain water. There were also many ponds dotting this city that helped conserve the rain and flood water for the lean season and lessened the pressure of excess water in the monsoon. Gone are the days when the Dholai Khal alone served the entire old part

and some of the new areas of the city. It is sheer neglect coupled with short-sightedness of different bodies concerned in the planning of the city that has hastened the canals' disappearance. Besides, the capital lacks effective storm sewerage that causes minifloods after a heavy shower. On the other hand, poor maintenance of smaller drains also contributed to the over-all malfunction of the drainage system. Real estate businessmen have also played a part in creating the problem. No supervision and monitoring system could be developed so far to bring a halt to the practices of the real estate businessmen. This is, however, too much to expect specially when the city planners do not appear to have a comprehensive picture in their minds of the city of the future.

However, some projects reportedly being taken up by Dhaka WASA are yet to bear fruit to the full. Since 1989, the WASA look over the responsibility of improving the drainage system of the city. According to WASA sources, the drainage network of the city covers an

area of 260 km. WASA, for improving the drainage system, took up a project with the assistance from the Japanese government in 1991. The project, already completed in January 1993, has involved the installation of a pumping station, a 47-metre long culvert, a box culvert measuring 800-metres on the Begunbari canal and the excavation of 3.3 km long Kalyanpur canal. When the project is fully commissioned, it is claimed that the water stagnation in much of the north-eastern parts of the city will be eased.

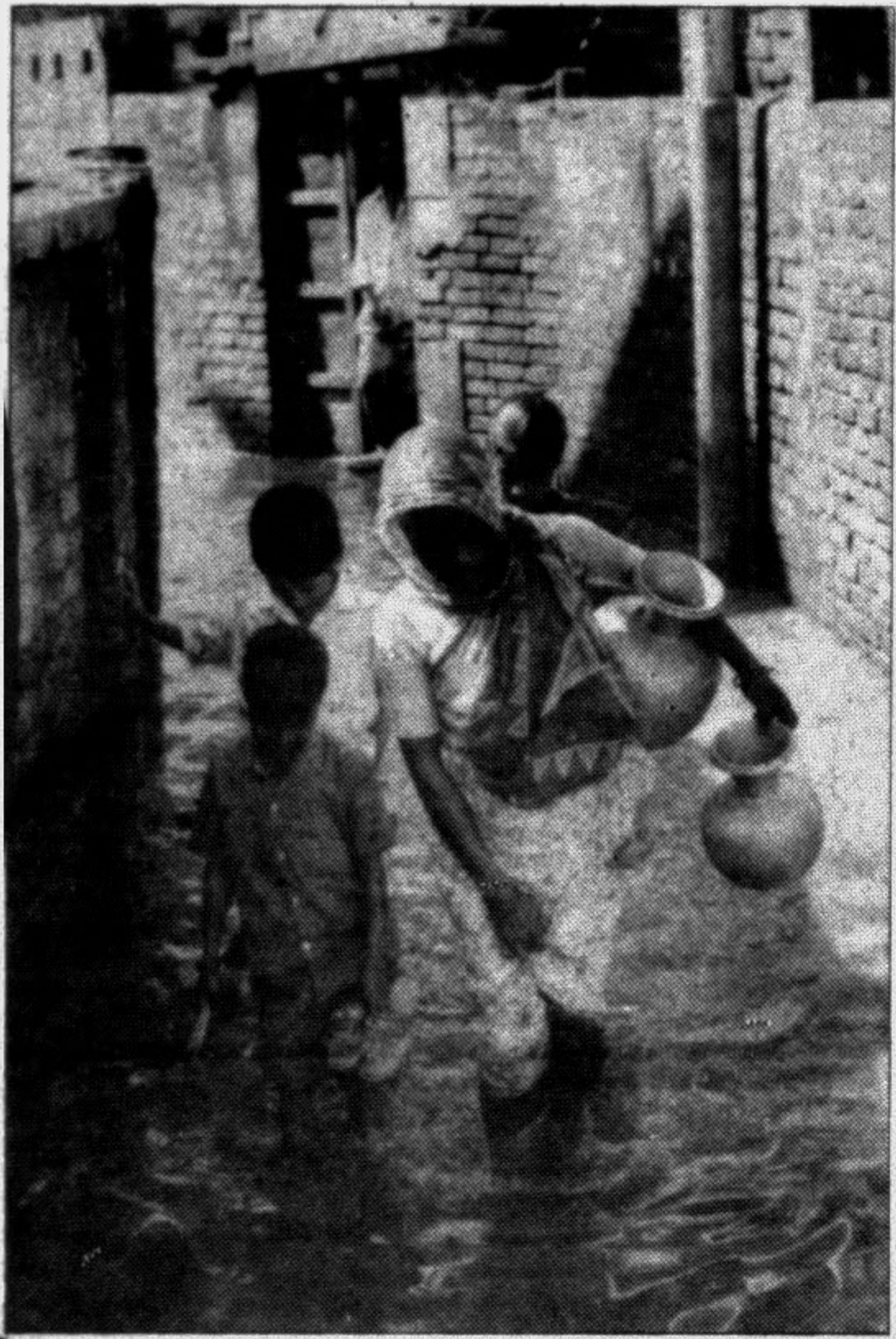
Besides, with financial assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), WASA has begun re-excavation of a canal in the western zone of the city and construction of drainage line in the first phase under the "Dhaka Integrated Flood Protection Project" from 1992. Under the project, due to be completed in 1995-96, 21 canals measuring 78 km will be re-excavated and 50 km underground drainage lines will be constructed. The project will cost Taka 159 crore of which the Asian Development Bank will provide Tk 121 crore and the balance 38 crore will be available from local resources. Already works of Tk 68.45 crore reportedly have been completed. The project, part of the greater Dhaka flood control and drainage scheme, looks set to effectively deal with a perennial problem faced by the city.

WASA said that in 1991-92, it constructed 10 km underground drainage line covering parts in the east, centre and west of the Dhaka city. Since January, WASA has started construction of 5 km underground drainage line at Segunbagicha, Mahakhali, Ibrahimpur, Rajabazar, Kanthalbagan, Begunbari. The construction is expected to be completed in 1993-94.

WASA sources said that 140 km area of Dhaka west would be brought under the drainage system when the project is completed.

Let us hope that with the completion of the above projects, it may be possible to effect substantial improvement in the drainage system of the city.

Meanwhile, there should be no let up in the realisation that many urban facilities in this city are increasingly finding it hard to endure the overwhelming pressure of the city population. Observers feel that there are some basic amenities that warrant special emphasis and which should remain above all ditherings. The city's drainage system is one of them.



Strike disrupts BA travellers

LONDON, June 4: A strike by baggage handlers and cabin crew at British Airways disrupted thousands of travelers Friday, and the carrier was facing the potential of even greater turbulence with labour this summer, reports AP.

The 17,000 members of the Transport and General Workers Union who struck at midnight said they had accepted the company's assurances over pay and job security as "a basis to work on in the future."

But they turned down the union leadership's request that they terminate the 24-hour strike during the day. Even though British Airways and the strikers seemed to have reached a more conciliatory stance, the carrier's pilots announced during the night that they had authorised a strike and would make greater demands.

"We didn't enter into this lightly," said Chris Darke, general secretary of the British Air Line Pilots Association, which represents more than 2,500 British Airways pilots.

3 more skinhead suspects held

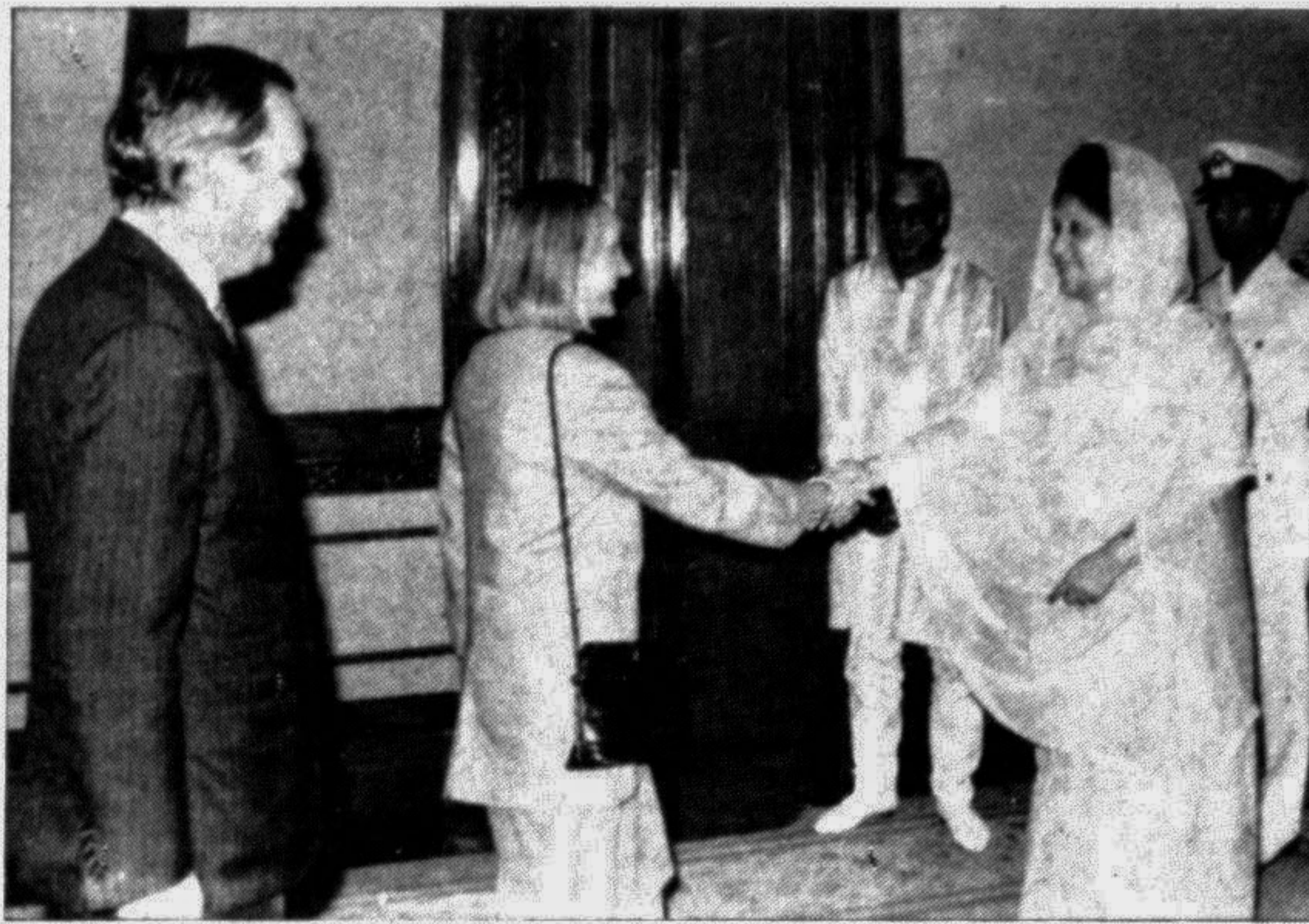
BONN, June 4: German police have arrested three more skinhead suspects in connection with the Solingen arson attack which killed five Turks at the weekend, security officials said today, reports Reuter.

The officials said federal prosecutor Alexander Von Stahl told a closed-door parliamentary committee meeting that three active right-wing extremists had been arrested on suspicion of setting fire to the Turks' house on Saturday.

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia exchanging greetings with members of the diplomatic corps at her Sugandha office on the occasion of Eid-ul Azha Wednesday. — PID photo

13 killed, 60 hurt in 4 road accidents

Thirteen persons were killed and 60 others injured in four road accidents in Dhaka and Chittagong on Tuesday and Wednesday, report agencies.

UNB from Savar reports, six people, four of them of a home-bound family, were killed and 20 injured in three accidents on the Dhaka-Aricha highway on Tuesday, the day before Eid-ul-Azha.

Police and witnesses said a Dhaka-bound coach crushed an auto-tempo near Ganashasthya Kendra at 2:35 pm, killing four members of a family and the helper of the vehicle.

While speeding away after killing the five, the coach tumbled into a roadside ditch, injuring five of its passengers.

The dead were identified as Muhammad Mafizullah, 35, his wife Asma Begum, 24, and their daughters Moushumi, 8, and Jhuma, 6, and auto-tempo helper Abdur Razzaque.

The family was going home at village Pulla in Dhamrai thana from Savar to celebrate Eid.

Auto-tempo driver Raquib was injured in the accident.

Another accident occurred when a Dhaka-bound minibus from Aricha skidded into a wayside ditch near the PATC at about 3:40 pm, killing a teenager girl and injuring nine other passengers.

The victim was identified as Farida, 14, who died on the spot.

Five cattle traders were injured when a truck, carrying sacrificial animals, overturned on the highway at Dhamrai at around 4:30 pm.

Six of the people injured in the accidents were shifted to different hospitals in Dhaka in critical condition after treatment in local health complexes. They were named Salam, Rahim, Jabber, Shaiful, Mahmud and Rashid.

BSS from Chittagong adds: Seven persons were killed,

Environment Day

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ation with the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Dhaka has organised a seminar at noon Saturday at the centre premises to mark the day.

Deputy Leader of the House Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury will attend the seminar as chief guest. Former ESCAP Executive Secretary S A M G Kibria will also be present.

Dhaka Ahsania Mission and the UNIC has jointly organised a discussion meeting to be held at the centre in the evening. State Minister for Environment and Forest, Fisheries and Livestock Goyeshwar Chandra Roy will be present at the meeting as chief guest.

UNDP Assistant Resident Representative Christine Spoerel will speak as special guest. The function will be presided over by Professor Mofiz Uddin Ahmed.

United Nations Association of Bangladesh (UNAB) in cooperation with UN Information Centre in Dhaka will organise a symposium at the centre auditorium. Environment expert Dr A M Sharafuddin will attend the function as main speaker. UNDP Deputy Resident Representative Wolfgang Fischer will also speak on the occasion. The meeting will be presided over by Professor M Innas Ali.

The Bangladesh Society for Conservation of Environment (BSCE) will also bring out a procession today.

Members of the society and others will take part in the procession which will start at 7 am from Shishu Park and will end at Bangladesh Shishu Academy.

The BSCE has arranged an essay contest and a discussion meeting on the occasion and have also organised a tree plantation programme in some educational institutions of the country.

Earlier, the National Association of UNESCO Club in Bangladesh yesterday urged the government to publish the national environment policy immediately. Editorial on page 4

four of them on the spot, and 40 others injured when a passenger bus fell from a bridge at Barairhat under Mirersarai Thana, 25 miles from Chittagong on Wednesday last.

According to Mirersarai police today, the accident occurred in the afternoon of Eid-day when the Shubhapur-bound bus carrying 55 passengers hit and broke a railing of the Badamtali bridge and fell into the water after the driver lost control of the vehicle.

Four persons died on the spot while the rest three succumbed to their injuries at hospital. Of the injured, ten persons were admitted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital. Attending doctors said that the condition of Polish, aged 12, was critical. Others were admitted to Feni Sadar Hospital and Sitakunda Hospital.

Only four of the dead were identified as Zahir Ahmed, 33, Nurul Islam alias Ledu, 45, Nani Gopal Sutradhar, 55, and Shah Alam, 30.

The bodies were handed over to relatives.

A district police officer, when contacted, told BSS that the unidentified bodies of the three victims were brought to the Andarkilla General Hospital for autopsy.

The driver and assistants of the bus, however, managed to flee, according to witnesses. Police salvaged the bus from the ditch Thursday.

The time for resurrection up!

CALCUTTA, June 4: The authorities here, after waiting a month for the resurrection of an Indian spiritual leader, are ready to take action to dispose of his decaying body, reports AFP.

Balak Brahmachari, who headed the Hindu Sect Santan Dal (Group of Children), died in a nursing home in this eastern Indian metropolis on May 5 at the age of 73.

Since then, his body has been kept on ice in a glass box at the group's headquarters here, in violation of a local law requiring that bodies be interred or cremated within 24 hours of death.

Thousands of followers have converged on the sect headquarters to catch a glimpse of the "sleeping Baba," who they claim could come back to life anytime.

But the patience of the West Bengal state government with the Santan Dal, which claims 70 million devotees across India, appears to be running out.

State officials said they have held a number of meetings this week with prominent local citizens to discuss the cremation of the Guru.

50 hurt as cops, workers in N'ganj clash

NARAYANGANJ, June 4: At least 50 people, including seven policemen, were injured in a clash between the workers of Ahmed Jutex and police in Bandar area on Tuesday, reports UNB.

Three seriously injured persons — Sarwar Hossain, a provisional SI of Police, and Azizul Huq (30) and Abul Bashar (28), both workers of Ahmed Jutex — were admitted to the Narayanganj Hospital.

Police fired 39 rounds of blank shots and five rounds of rubber bullets during the five-hour clash that started at around eight in the morning. Earlier, police baton-charged the agitating workers and also lobbed 14 rounds of teargas shell to disperse them.

Three workers were arrested from the spot and taken to Bandar thana.

Eid-ul-Azha

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perity of the country and solidarity and brotherhood of the Muslim ummah.

The national flags flew atop all important public and private buildings. The main thoroughfares and road islands from the Zia International Airport to Bangabhaban were tastefully decorated with national flags, festoons and banners inscribed with "Eid Mubarrak" both in Bangla and Arabic.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia hosted a reception on the occasion at her Sugandha office in the morning.

Ministers, Members of Parliament, leaders of different political parties, high civil and military officials, senior journalists, businessmen, academicians and elite of the city attended the reception.

Earlier, the Prime Minister hosted a reception for the diplomats at the same venue.

Heads of different foreign missions and UN agencies and their spouses attended the reception.

Bangladesh Television and Radio Bangladesh put up special programmes highlighting the significance of the holy Eid-ul-Azha.

The national dailies brought out special supplements on the occasion Tuesday as the three-day newspaper holiday began on Tuesday.

Improved diet was served to the inmates of jails, hospitals and vagrant homes on the occasion.

The day was highlighted by the sacrifice of animals and distribution of sacrificial meat to relations and destitute.

In Chittagong, the main Eid congregation was held at Jamiatul Falah Complex. Eid congregations were also held in different other places including Laidighi Maidan and the stadium.

In Rajshahi, the main Eid congregation was held at Shahmukddum Central Eidgah where thousands of devotees offered their Eid prayer braving incessant rain.

In Khulna town, the main Eid congregation was held at Khulna Town Mosque.

Special prayers were offered at all the Eid congregations for peace, progress and prosperity of the nation.

Discussion on draft Russian constitution today

MOSCOW, June 4: An assembly which opens in Moscow on Saturday to discuss the draft of a new Russian constitution will group around 700 delegates from Russia's 88 regions and leading social and political organisations, reports Reuter.

The assembly will open on Saturday at 0700 GMT with a full plenary session of all delegates. President Boris Yeltsin will outline his draft in an address.

Into its five constituent groups to discuss his draft constitution article by article.

Yeltsin has made in clear his draft must form the basis of the new constitution but has said he is prepared to compromise with a version prepared by parliament. He is unlikely to welcome any elements of a third, pro-communist draft.

Only a simple majority of participants in each group is needed to approve or reject each article.

Yeltsin will chair plenary sessions to review progress while the five groups will be controlled by his appointees.

The group have until June 12 to send suggested alternatives to a special working group which will then start drafting the final version of the constitution.

A final plenary meeting of all delegates, which Yeltsin will address, is due to meet on June 16 to agree on the final draft.

The Midnight File

All parties to attend ME talks

AMMAN, June 4: A PLO official said today that all the Arab parties to bilateral peace talks with Israel would take part in the next round in Washington. Saleh Ra'fat, a member of the central committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), speaking before Arab foreign ministers meet to coordinate in Amman on Sunday, said: "The Amman meeting will discuss Arab coordination and strategy... the issue of whether or not to go to the next round of talks is not on the agenda, reports Reuter.

\$700 m US aid for Russia

WASHINGTON, June 4: US and Russian officials signed the first of several agreements Friday to provide 700 million dollars worth of American food assistance to Russia. The package will provide 435 million dollars in credit to buy US farm commodities under the "Food for Progress" programme and 66.5 million dollars in donated butter and wheat. The remaining 200 million dollars covers transportation costs, reports AP.

4 killed as rival sects clash in Peshawar

PESHAWAR, June 4: At least four people have died and 26 were injured in fighting between rival sects over the past two days in a tribal area bordering Afghanistan, officials and sources said today. A dispute over use of water from a mountain rivulet triggered the fighting Wednesday amid celebrations of the Muslims Eid festival, they said, reports AFP.

HC judge revokes ban on RSS, Bajrang Dal

NEW DELHI, June 4: A judge Friday lifted a six-month-old ban on two Hindu fundamentalist groups accused of destroying an ancient Muslim mosque and inciting nationwide communal riots that killed nearly 2,000 people, reports AP.

But the judge, appointed by the government to review the ban on three Hindu extremist groups, upheld it against the World Hindu Council, which has said that it wants to destroy two other historic mosques in India.

The government was examining the ruling and deciding whether to appeal it to a higher court, said spokesman S P Taneja.

The order could undermine the government's effort to curb Hindu-Muslim tensions and stop India's largest opposition party from gaining power by promoting Hindu nationalism.

Justice P K Bahri, the High Court judge issued a 350-page decision lifting the ban on the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Bajrang Dal, saying there were insufficient grounds to declare them unlawful.

The RSS is the oldest nationwide Hindu fundamentalist group in India, and it helped found what is now the nation's top opposition group, the Bharatiya Janata Party. The Bajrang Dal is a much smaller Hindu militant group based in northern India.

The ban on the three groups was imposed by the government on December 10, four days after hordes of Hindu militants leveled a 16th-century mosque in the northern town of Ayodhya. The three groups organized the rally that led to the destruction.

It caused two months of communal riots in India, especially in Bombay, where 800 people were killed, most of them Muslims.

The ban prevented the three groups from holding public meetings, publishing newspapers and staging rallies.

It was the third time the RSS has been outlawed since 1948, the year after India became independent from Britain.

Spy caught in Australia

CANBERRA, June 4: Australia said today it had caught a double agent operating in its security services but would not say for which foreign power the spy was working, reports Reuter.

The person, an employee of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), has been charged with stealing documents "likely to be directly or indirectly useful to a foreign power," Justice Minister Duncan Kerr said.

"It will be alleged that there was a systematic removal of documentation from ASIO," he said in a press statement.

Kerr later said in a radio interview the police were still investigating and declined to identify the country involved.

Police have laid 22 charges against the accused, including taking documents "prejudicial to the safety of the Commonwealth (Australia)," they carry a maximum of seven years' jail.

Chakma refugees

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repatriation on those week days, both sides will mutually choose other convenient days.

The refugees, mainly Chakma, Tripura and Marma, will be received at the Matrang and Tabalchhari reception camps.

Meanwhile, the government has allocated an amount of Taka 2.22 crore for rehabilitation of the tribal refugees, official sources said.

Of the amount, Taka five thousand in cash will be given to each family in addition to six months' ration and free medical facilities.

ADP

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The ministries would also take actions against those officials directly responsible for particular projects if their projects fail to materialise.

The ECNEC had also decided to take a more cautious approach in appointing the project directors because this factor had been identified as a major reason for slow implementation.

There also would not be any part-time project directors for the bigger projects.

Meanwhile, the government has had to scale down its next year's ADP to Tk 9750 crore from the earlier amount of Tk 10500 crore as envisaged in the three-year rolling investment plan.

"We had all the domestic and external resources to keep the development size up to the projected one," the same source said. "But we did not want to make it too ambitious. Rather we want to gear up our implementation activities to make a full utilization of the ADP."

However, sources pointed out that some problems like appointment of consultants by the donors were no less responsible for preventing quick implementation.